

"Why Reform?"

Text: Romans 5:1, "Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Scripture: Romans 5:1-11

For the past few years, Reformation Sunday has been played down, and in particular, the story of Martin Luther and how it all came about. The reason being, that the church throughout the world has been involved in what has been called "The Ecumenical Movement," and it was not in the best interests of this movement to play up the Reformation, since the Roman Catholic church has been involved in this movement along with all of the Protestant bodies.

A part of this thinking has been due to the fact that we of the Protestants have had a tendency to look down our noses at our Roman Catholic brethren. We claim Martin Luther as one of us and not one of them. But the truth of the matter has always been that Martin Luther never had any intention of leaving the Roman Catholic church, and only did so reluctantly when he could do nothing else.

The Reformation as we know it was started in Wittenburg Germany in the year 1517 when Martin Luther posted his ninety five theses on the door of the cathedral there. But actually the Reformation did not start in 1517, but had its start in the year 910. Before Luther ever came upon the scene there were many devout men who tried to reform the church from within, but because Luther was able to get it started in such a big way, he received all the credit for it.

The Reformation started in the Monastery at Cluny in Western France, The purpose of the reform was to make the clergy and the monks more pious, more moral, and more concerned with the religious things of life instead of the secular things of the world. The movement spread until it engulfed all of the clergy by the first half of the 11th century.

Then around 1044 the Papacy itself had to be reformed for at this time there were three Popes, each one claiming to be the real one. This really split the church asunder. Finally the issue was settled by the German

Emperor Henry III., by his selection of one over the others. It was after that's that the Spanish Inquisition came along with its own brand of reform. What started out to be a means of separating the believers from the unbelievers turned into a means of torturing people to extract confessions of heresy from them. John Wycliff of England not only was a great biblical scholar at this time, but he was also a reformer. He opposed the wealth of the church and the interference of the clergy in political life. In particular he opposed the interference of the Pope. He translated the Bible from the Latin into English between 1382 and 1384. Some students from Bohemia studied at Oxford when Wycliff lecture there. They returned to their native land and spread the doctrines and writings of Wycliff. John Huss became a follower of Wycliff by his agreement with the theological works of Wycliff. This put him in disfavor with the church and he was summoned by the Council of Constance to answer their charges under the safety of a safe conduct pass.

The Council listened to the charges against him, and in particular noted the influence of Wycliff in his life. ~~They ruled that the long dead body of~~ They found John Wycliff guilty of heresy and ordered that his long dead body be dug up and burned at the stake. So the bones of Wycliff were dug up and burned as ordered by the Council. They found John Huss guilty of heresy as well and condemned him to be burned at the stake as well. So Huss was executed and the church had removed another agitator from its midst. This in capsule form is what set the stage for Martin Luther to come upon the scene.

If the father of Luther had had his way, there would have been no reformation at least as we know it today, for he wanted his son to be a lawyer. Luther, in deference of his father started out in this direction, but two events led to his changing his course and studying to be ~~as~~ a priest. The first event was that one of his very closest friends died shortly after Luther's graduation from Erfurt University. This shook the young Luther very visibly. The second event took place as he was walking through a forest between Erfurt and Eisleben. While in this forest a severe thunderstorm arose and Luther became terrified by the crashing lightning all around him. He

narrowly escaped death, and fell to his knees and prayed to one of the patron saints of his childhood. He cried out, "Help me, dear St. Anne, I will become a monk." And it was with this assertion that he entered the Augustinian cloister at Erfurt.

But Luther was in a turmoil all of his monastic life. He was searching for peace of soul and was concerned that he could not do enough to be in the Grace of God. He himself once remarked, "If a monk could have gone to heaven by his observance of monastic vows, I would have been the one." He prayed earnestly and went to mass and confession and used all of the means of being devout, yet through all of this he could not be certain of the love of God and the forgiveness of his sins. He was ordained to the priesthood and the celebration of his first mass was a time of great anxiety for him. His sense of unworthiness and a fear of committing a grievous sin by making even the smallest mistake gripped him.

Perhaps the Catholic doctrine of the elements had something to do with this. At a point in the consecration of the elements they believe that the wine becomes the blood of Christ, and the bread becomes His flesh. This is what frightened Luther, that at the handling of Christ's body and blood he might make a mistake in handling this Holy of Holies.

It was after he became a professor that he had the opportunity to travel to Rome. When he arrived he fell to the ground and exclaimed, "Hail, Holy Rome." He looked with admiration upon St. Peter's, and he looked for the spiritual blessing he felt he would receive there. He said later that while there he wished his parents were dead, because he felt certain that he could have prayed them out of purgatory, with his prayers while there.

Paul

His son told the story how ~~Luther~~ his father is supposed to have climbed the stone stairs known as "Pilates Stairway" upon his knees. And while doing this the words from Paul's letter to the Romans rang in his ears, "The just shall live by faith." This is what started him upon the Reformation. But it was also how the priests acted in Rome that convinced him the church needed reformed. During mass they hurried through it, and they made a joke of the

consecration of the elements. The mass was entirely in Latin, and most of the people did not know Latin, and so the priests chanted the words, "Bread you are and bread you shall remain," instead of the proper words for this part of the mass.

But still Luther returned home a devout son of the church. But little by little he became alarmed at the conditions of the church. He saw the poor peasants of his parish being bilked of their money in the sale of indulgences. The money thus derived went to build St. Peter's basilica. The indulgences consisted of a piece of paper paid for by the individual peasant, which gave them the forgiveness of a certain sin. They could even buy forgiveness of a sin they would commit in the future. For instance, if they felt they might steal a loaf of bread in a day or so, they could buy an indulgence and this forgave them for that future sin.

But worse yet, was the treasury of merit. This was a sort of bank in which the unused merits of Jesus and the saints were stored. It worked like this: Jesus and the saints lived such exemplary lives, that they were unable to use all of the goodness in their lives. Thus these leftover merits of Jesus and the saints could be sold to a person, thus giving him some needed merits for his life. For a small sum they could purchase some merits to last them for a certain length of time. Then when he could afford more, he went and bought more. So you see, this is what Luther lashed out against.

But as I said before, Luther did not wish to break with the church, but merely to reform it. But due to the stubbornness of Pope Leo X. the situation got out of hand and Luther was forced to make the break.

Luther was promised a safe conduct pass to a Council to be held at Worms, but due to the quick thinking of some of his friends his life was spared, as they kidnapped him before the Council could seize him and execute him. It was while at the Council that Luther made his classic remark when he was asked to recant all that he had said and done. He stood before them and boldly stated, "I cannot do otherwise. Here I stand. God help me." This then is the story of Martin Luther. But is this story finished? I think not.

For I believe the Protestant church is standing on the verge of a Reformation, but of a different sort. I mentioned before ~~about~~ the so called "Ecumenical Movement" which is going on in the church at large. At one point there was a very strong tendency for all of the denominations to press for this gigantic merger which was called, "The Consultation On Church Union." But slowly ~~in~~ and surely, many of the denominations have slowed down to a crawl. Our United Church of Christ has come to the forefront again and is pushing very strongly for this merger. But I see a very grave danger in it.

The danger lies in the fact that a hierarchy will be set up in New York and we will all assume one identity and it will be an identity of nothingness. I believe very sincerely that each denomination needs to Reform itself, and I for one would like to see this happen in our own UCC. I say this because we have become a denomination of "Social workers." But when a ~~fall~~ minister protests this, the question is raised "Why Reform?" Are we not doing the bidding of Christ when we feed, and clothe people, and when we free them from prison and resist the death penalty, and seek amnesty for draft evaders and deserters?" "Why reform ~~all~~ all of this, because we are on the right track?"

But are we? I realize that we must take care of the physical needs of people everywhere, But of first and utmost importance is to start with the heart and soul of the individual and when we have reformed this part of them, then they will automatically look out for the needs of their brothers. Jesus did not instruct his followers to go out and feed the world. Instead He said, "Go and make disciples of all nations." He was telling them to make the people followers of Jesus Christ. And a follower of Jesus Christ accepts Him by faith, and then good works follow. This was the message that was imparted to Martin Luther that started the Reformation. I am sure his fellow clergy said to him on different occasions, "Why Reform, Martin? Let things as they are. We have a good thing going don't spoil it. Let's keep these peasants ignorant, and working for their salvation, and that way there is plenty in it for all of us." But we know that Luther was not content to have a hierarchy off somewhere

bilking the peasants and keeping them ignorant as to what salvation really was. Luther was determined that he had been the chosen vessel of his time to show the peasants that salvation was free for the taking, and only faith was involved to receive it.

Someone once penned the lines, (Faith, vision of)

This is the vision that Luther had, that thrones of Rome, and kingdoms run by the priests would be toppled and Jesus Christ would reign supreme in all lives, throughout all of the world.

This is the vision that you and I need in our present day world. We need to be reformers in our own right. Reformers of our nation, of our state, of our city, of our neighborhood, and of ourselves. And to the question, "Why Reform?", that many would ask us, the answer always must be, "Because Jesus Christ demands it of me, and I must be bringing others to Him if I really love Him." May God give us the heart and mind of the reformer.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.
The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

ST. PAUL'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
BUTLER, PENNSYLVANIA

REFORMATION SUNDAY OCTOBER 27, 1974
YOUTH SUNDAY

REV. RALPH C. LINK, PASTOR
MRS. MARILYN STEPHENSON, ORGANIST
MR. RALPH COOPER, CHOIR DIRECTOR
PAULA STEPHENSON, BRIAN KENNEDY - ACOLYTES

ORDER OF WORSHIP 11:00 A.M.

PRELUDE MUSIC: "AUTUMN" CHAMINAOE
"HE THAT BELIEVETH" FRICK

SILENT PRAYER

*PROCESSIONAL HYMN No. 43 "WHEN MORNING SINGS THE SKIES"
*ACCOLYTE - CHORAL AMEN

*EXHORTATION

*CONFESSION (IN UNISON) "MOST MERCIFUL FATHER, WHO HAST SET US IN COMMUNITIES, AND BOUND US TOGETHER BY COMMON DUTIES AND SYMPATHIES, WE LIFT OUR HEARTS TO THEE AND PRAY WITH ONE ACCORD THAT THOU WOULDST SEND THY BLESSING UPON OUR CITY AND NATION, PROSPERING EVERY HONEST MAN, SWEEPING AWAY EVERY TEMPTATION TO EVIL, DELIVERING THE WEAK OF OUR PEOPLE FROM INTemperance AND VICE OF EVERY KIND, FEEDING MEN'S HANDS WITH LABOUR AND THEIR MOUTHS WITH BREAD, AND SPREADING THROUGH EVERY HOME THY LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE, THAT WE MAY PRAISE THEE EVERMORE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST OUR LORD. AMEN."

*KYRIE (CHOIR, CONGREGATION AND PASTOR)

*ASSURANCE OF PAROON - CHORAL AMEN

*PRAISE

*PASTOR: "O LORD OPEN OUR LIPS.

*PEOPLE: AND OUR MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE

*DOXOLOGY No. 551

SCRIPTURE LESSON: ROMANS 5: 1-11

HYMN No. 282 "FAITH OF OUR FATHERS!"

*AFFIRMATION OF OUR FAITH (STATEMENT OF FAITH)

*GLORIA PATRI

*CALL TO PRAYER

*PASTOR: THE LORD BE WITH YOU.

*PEOPLE: AND WITH THY SPIRIT.

*PASTOR: LET US PRAY.

PRAYER AND PRAYER RESPONSE

OFFERING

OFFERTORY "CHORALE"

BLAKE

RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

ANTHEM: "THEY'LL KNOW WE ARE CHRISTIANS" SCHOLTES

HOWARD BOLAM - GUITAR; ROLAND THOMPSON, SAXAPHONE.

SERMON: "WHY REFORM?"

PRAYER AND LORD'S PRAYER

*HYMN OF DEDICATION No. 281 "A MIGHTY FORTRESS IS OUR GOD"

*BENEDICTION AND THREE FOLD AMEN

ORGAN POSTLUDE: "ALLEGRO RISOLUTO" WILSON

----- * CONGREGATION STANDING -----

THE LOVELY FLOWERS ON THE ALTAR HAVE BEEN PLACED BY MR. LLOYD FRENCH IN MEMORY OF HIS "WIFE" - GERTRUDE FRENCH.

SERVING AS USHERS TODAY ARE: *RAYMOND COVERT, ROBBIE VINROE, ROBERT DELLEN, BRIAN PFABE AND STEVE SMITH. DEACON AND MRS. CHARLES PENAR WILL REPRESENT COUNCIL AT THE DOOR TODAY.

THE ATTENDANCE LAST SUNDAY WAS 217.

NURSERY WILL BE PROVIDED TODAY BY MRS. LINDA McMILLIN, MRS. JANE ARMSTRONG AND LIZ ARMSTRONG.

*HOSPITALIZED: MRS. ELIZABETH CLARK, MR. MIKE NAZARUK, BOMH; MRS. VONNIE PAYNE - JAMISON MEMORIAL HOSPITAL, NEW CASTLE, PA.; MR. EVERETT McCANDLESS - WEST PENN. HOSP., PITTS.

TODAY - 3:00 P.M. SPECIAL SERVICE FOR SHUT-INS

AND COMMUNION - ANYONE WISHING TO ATTEND MAY DO SO. *FL. WAS OK*

> WE WELCOME INTO OUR FELLOWSHIP TODAY:

BY PROFESSION OF FAITH:

MR. & MRS. JOHN STEVENSON, 429 MILLER ST.

MRS. ROSE McFEATHERS, 435 NEW CASTLE ST.

BY LETTER OF TRANSFER:

MR. ROBERT WEISENSTEIN, 120 CORNELL DRIVE

> WORLD COMMUNITY DAY WILL BE OBSERVED ON FRIDAY, NOV.

1, AT THE GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH, AT 7:30 P.M. THE SUBJECT, "THEY HAVE A DREAM", WILL BE DEVELOPED BY MRS. OAKLEY WEAVER. THE PROGRAM IS SPONSORED BY THE WOMEN'S COMMISSION OF THE GREATER BUTLER AREA COUNCIL OF CHURCHES.

> WE WELCOME THOSE VISITING WITH US TODAY, AND ASK THAT YOU SIGN THE GUEST REGISTER TO THE LEFT OF THE NAVE.

STOLE STU - SEE MAMA KRAVER

YOUTH - FROM PRAYER BOOK P. 3, C/O DENNIS YF

This caps form what set stage 4 Luth.

2

Luth Dad want him he lawyer.

Luth start out this direction

2 events change this,

1. good friend die short after grad Erfurt Univ
this shook yg Luth

2. walk forest thunder storm, narrowly escape
deth, on knees pray St. Ann, "Help me dear St.
Anna, I will become a monk.

Thus enter Augustinian monastery Erfurt

Luth in turmoil all monastic life

search peace soul/concern no do enuf B in Gr. of G

He say, "If a monk could have gone heaven by his ob-
servance of monastic vows, I would have been the 1."

Prayed earnest/went mass, confused all means B devout
yet thru all this he no certain love G & 4give sins
He ordained priesthood & celebrate 1st mass time
anxiety 4 him.

His sense unworthy & fear commit griev sin by
make mistake gripped him.

Perhaps Cath doc elements did this.

At pt in consec wine/blood & bread/flesh

This frighten Luth handle flesh/blood/Jesus

Become prof travel Rome.

fell ground "Hail holy Rome."

looked admir St. Peters, & looked spiritual bless

Said later wished parent dad, could pray out purg

Son Paul told Luth climb Pilate Stairway on knees

& while do this words Paul ring in ears, "The just

shall live by faith."

(This what start him on ref.

Also how priests act Rome convince him ch. need ref.

hurried thru mass/made joke of it

Latin lang & consec, bred thou art/bred shall rema

Still came home devout son of church.

Little by little became alarmed conditions of ch.

Saw peasants bilked of money, went bild St. Peters

Indulgences/pay 4 4giveness sins/even future Basil

Tr. Merits/sts, Js Xp stored/peasants hot

Coun Worms/ promised safe conduct pass

friends kidnapped B4 coun could nab.

while at Coun make famous remark, "I cannot do

otherwise. Here I stand. God help me."

this story M. Luth,

But is story finished? I think not.

"Why Reform?"

Text: Romans 5:1,

"Therefore, since we are justified by faith,
we have peace with God through our Lord Js Xp."
Scripture Romans 5:1-11

4 1st few yrs Ref. Sun. played down

partic story of M. Luther & how came about
reason; Ecumenical Movement."

not in best interests 2 play up ref,
Rom Cath involved & no want offend.

We Prots at times looked down nose at Rom Cath
we think Luther 1 us, not them
but Luth no want break with church, just ref.

Ref start Wittenburg Germ 1517, at least we think
but actually start long 4 that in 910
many devout men want cleanse ch. within,
Luth got started hig way, thus he get credit.

Ref start monastery Cluny, West Fr.
purpose ref, make clergy/monks more pious/moral,
& more concerned relig things life, instead/secula
movement spread til engulf all clergy by 1st
half 11th c.

Around 1044 Papacy had B ref.

3 Popes each 1 claim real 1

this split church.

Germ Emp. Henry III settle, choose 1

Then Span. Inq. & own brand ref.

What start means separate believer/unbeliever,
turn in2 means torture peop extract conf. heresy

J. Wyclif Eng. bib scholar this time/ref. also

He oppose wealth ch/interfere clergy political li:

In partic oppose interfere Pope

He translate Bib Latin/Eng 1382 - 1384

Students Bohemia study Oxford while he teach

they return native land spread doc. beliefs Wyclif

Jn Huss become follow Wyclif by agree thee worke

this put him disfavor with ch.

he summoned Coun. Constance answer charge &

promised safe conduct pass.

Counc listen charges & note Wyclif influence

Wyclif found guilty heresy & long ded body ordered

ung up and burned at stake.

This done, & Jn Huss found guilty/condem/urned

So Huss exec. & ch. thru nother agitator

4 I Blieve prot ch verge ref diff sort 3
Ecumen move was strong & all denom press 2 it
Was called COCU
slowly/surely many denom stop think
Our UCC in 4front & push again
I see grave danger in it.
Danger lies hierarchy setup N.Y. & assume ident of
whingness
I Blieve very sincerely each denom need ref self
I would like see happen UCC
UCC Bcome ^{PERSON OF THE} Social Gospel ~~orientated~~. **EMPHASIS**
If minister protest quest ask, "Why Reform?!"
Are we not doing bidding Xp, we feed/clothe/free
from prison/amnesty so forth.
Why Ref. when we on rt track?

But are we?
I realize must take car phys needs,
but 1st 4most, must start hart & soul of indiv,
& when they ref automat look out bros.
Js not instruct follows go & feed world,
Insted, "Go and make disciples all nations"
He tell follows make more follows Js Xp
A follow Js Xp accepts Him by faith & good works
naturally follow
This message Luth had given him that start ref
I sure fellow clergy say, "Why ref Martin?"
Let's keep things as is, /a good thing do not spoil/
keep peasants ignor & work for salv/& there is
then plenty for all of us.

But Luth not content have hierarchy off somewhere
to ng from peasants & keep they ignor of salv.
Luth determ he chosen vessel of his time 2 show
peas salv free for taking & only faith 2 receive it
(Illustration: Faith, vision of)

This must been vision Luth had,
That throne Rome, kingdoms run by clergy toppled
& Js reign supreme all lives thruout world.

This vision U & I need present world
We need B ref own rt.
Refs nation/state/city/neighborhood/selves
& 2 quest. "Why Ref?" many might ask,
answer always must B,
"Because Js Xp demand this of me, & I must B bring
others 2 Him, if I really love Him."
May G give each hart ~~of ref~~ mind of ref. ^{REF}

THE

THE

Shirley & Ralph Charles Link, Nancy Link, Dale with Lianne his wife, Lloyd Link with Karen his wife
Jessica in front of Ralph C. Link
Ethan and Alisha in front of R. Dale and Lianne Link (the eldest son & family)









Ralph C. Link
153 Keck Road
Sarver, Pa. 16055
(412) 352-1103

Born: April 9, 1929, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Married: December 15, 1951
Wife: Shirley Margaret Neill
Born: December 8, 1930, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Children: Ralph Dale Link, born May 11, 1955, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Lloyd Alan Link, born May 28, 1958, Pittsburgh, Pa.
Nancy Lynn Link, born March 15, 1961, Butler, Pa.

SCHOOLING:

Graduated from Perry High School, Pittsburgh, Pa.
June 1947

Lay Ministry School, Penn West Conference of United
Church of Christ, September 1965 to May 1969

Commissioned Lay Minister June 1969

Lancaster Theological Seminary, Lancaster, Pa.,
September 1970

Graduated from Lancaster Theological Seminary May 1974

Ordained to Christian Ministry March 10, 1974

PASTORATES:

As Lay Minister: short term, 1 month or less in
various churches 1965 to 1967

Emlenton Lamartine Charge of United Church of Christ
1967 to 1969

Short term in various churches 1970 until Seminary
entrance July 1970

July 1970 to December 1973 Student Pastor at Trinity
Charge, New Bloomfield, Duncannon, Pa., Penn Central
Conference, United Church of Christ

December 1973 to present, St. Paul's United Church of
Christ, Butler, Pa., Penn West Conference, United
Church of Christ

PERSONAL TESTIMONY

OF

Ralph C. Link

I am the youngest of five children. I was born just prior to the onset of the Depression. Our family was very poor. My father was an alcoholic and my mother was a very religious person who was searching for the Lord. During my childhood she did her best to teach me the things of the Lord. Later in life she came to a personal relationship with Him.

I grew up in the Evangelical and Reformed Church where salvation by grace alone was not preached nor taught. I knew all about Jesus, what He did, how He lived, His miracles, His death and resurrection, but I didn't know Him personally.

My life had many ups and downs and all the while I was attending church and striving with my good works to please God. At a very low point in my life when we were deeply in debt and my wife and three children were all ill, I came to the crossroads. I watched a Billy Graham Crusade on television from some distant city and the message he preached seemed to be directed right at me. I wrestled with making that commitment to Christ, but didn't. The next afternoon and evening at work on the 4 to 12 shift I came to the conclusion that I needed to make that commitment to Christ. It seemed like there was no other choice if life was to have any meaning. That night when I came home from work at 1:00 A.M., I laid face down on the living room floor and told God that I couldn't live my life in my own strength and I accepted the gift of salvation from my Savior Jesus Christ. My life has never been the same.

Through several meaningful circumstances I was called by God to serve Him in the Christian Ministry and to help spread that wonderful message of salvation through the shed blood of Jesus Christ. What a wonderful and rewarding time it has been and I give Him all the praise for my salvation and the opportunity to serve Him.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

OF

Ralph C. Link

I believe the Bible, both the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired inerrant Word of God. I believe the Bible is the complete revelation of His will for the salvation of men and it is the final authority for the Christian faith and life.

I believe in one God, who is eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

I believe in the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is true God and true man. I believe that He was born of the Virgin Mary, that He lived in sinless life, that He performed the miracles recorded in Scripture, that He died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins, that He bodily arose from the dead, that He ascended on high where He is at the right hand of Almighty God as our intercessor.

I believe in the Holy Spirit and that He comes and indwells each believer at the time of conversion. I believe that He lives in each believer to lead, to instruct, and to convict so that a believer may live a more godly life.

I believe that through the shed blood of Jesus Christ and through His resurrection, this is the only ground for justification and salvation for all who receive Him. A Lord and Savior and to such as receive Him, they are born of the Holy Spirit and become children of God.

I believe water baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of the Church but are not means of salvation.

I believe in the personal and premillennial and imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I believe in the resurrection of the dead, for the believer to resurrection of life and joy with the Lord, for the unbeliever to resurrection of judgement and everlasting punishment.